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**THE SEASON.**







"Muse,  
..... draped discreetly in a skirt and vest,  
Which just withhold the secrets they suggest."



# THE SEASON:

A SATIRE.

BY

ALFRED AUSTIN.

WITH FRONTISPIECE OF "THE MODERN MUSE," BY

THOMAS GEORGE COOPER.

*Slender.*—Why do your dogs bark so ? be there bears i' th' Town ?

*Anne Page.*—I think there are, Sir ! I heard them talked of.

*Slender.*—I love the sport well ; . . . but the women have so  
cried and shrieked at it, that it passed.

*Merry Wives of Windsor.*

Second Edition, Revised.

LONDON :

GEORGE MANWARING,

8, KING WILLIAM STREET, STRAND.

1861.





TO THE RIGHT HON.

BENJAMIN DISRAELI, M.P.

BY ONE

WHO REVERES HIS GENIUS

AND

EXULTS IN HIS SUCCESS,

*This Book*

IS, WITH PERMISSION,

DEDICATED.



“The diseases of society can, no more than corporal maladies, be prevented or cured without being spoken about in plain language.”—JOHN STUART MILL, *Principles of Political Economy*.



## PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

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THE first words of my Preface shall be a frank acknowledgment that "The Season" has been treated, on the whole, with a toleration more liberal than I anticipated. The usages of speech being now such as they are, it could have escaped censure only by escaping notice. The latter I was anxious that it should receive, or I should not have published it: that I was therefore prepared to accept the former, may be inferred.

To censure illiberal, intolerant, and impertinent, I have, I am assured, "administered a very severe flagellation." Such was my intention.

I speak here to critics wholly different : different not only from those whom I have thought it my duty to rebuke, but different as well in the degrees of intimacy with which they are known to me, as in the exceptions which they have taken to my Satire. All these, however, from the personal friend daily met to the professed reviewer never seen, are honourably akin in this : they have, none of them, stretched the liberty of saying what they think into the license of so saying it as to injure, if possible—by no possibility, to correct—the subject of their animadversion. They have spoken, some because they cared for me, others because they cared for literature, all because they cared for what they conceive to be the cause of sound morals. To such censors the smallest return that I can make is to be in my reply at once moderate and manly. I will do my best.

It has been said in *The Press*, by a



critic severe but pleasant, that I do not "pretend to be very desperately in earnest." I would assure this courteous gentleman, and all those whose suspicions he may have interpreted, that they unintentionally do me grievous wrong. The "something in the world amiss" which easy-going folks console themselves by imagining "will be unriddled by-and-by," I would alter if I could, at once; and though, so far, I have felt myself unable to assist in its alteration further than by calling attention to its existence, to this incipient but surely necessary portion of the task I will unaffectedly say that I did feel myself not altogether unequal.

But how was I to make people consider what I believed to be the fact—that the well-dressed drones of society, assisted by the at times no less splendidly-caparisoned honey-bees of the Change and the Forum, occupy themselves with pastimes not en-

nobling to the initiated, and not edifying nor encouraging to outsiders? The world has become so large, so noisy, and so indifferently different, that he who addresses it in a whisper has not the smallest chance of being heard. Of this convinced, I addressed it in tinted paper, attractive frontispiece, Magenta binding, and language loud, strong, and insolent. That I am addressing it again so soon (and now, I trust, with more of gentleness), proves, at least, that my method of gaining its ear was not ill-devised. I knew well enough that no other method would avail; that no modest apparition in print, no sleek sentences, no orthodox tropes, no polished reproaches, would wake from their drowsy Sabbath disregard, or startle from their week-day *feux-de-joie* the well-to-do optimists who, not seeing their way to making themselves or their neighbours any better, seek their consolation in making both ineffably worse. I saw, or thought I saw, that the company

of the world, which the wisest authority has pronounced to be a stage, and which I will presume to add, is a stage essentially dramatic and sad with pathos, has assumed the attitudes and costume of the ballet, with gauze somewhat more maliciously arranged ; and I was ambitious to remind them that, in spite of warm approval from the young, and more cautious though perhaps not more frigid countenance from the old, life is a very "serious business," after all. A comic side it has, no doubt ; and occasionally, though seldom surely, its aspect is somewhat farcical. But never, I most solemnly believe, does it present a front so utterly degraded that the impertinent may presume to take liberties with its dormant dignity ; since, however often forgetting that it is divine, it can never consent to be less than human. When an outrageous acrobat plays a happy-go-lucky game of pitch-and-toss with a frame coined, we are assured, in God's majestic mint,

the public, though fascinated into evanescent applause, returning to the simple walks of every-day occupation, are far too mindful of its value not to condemn. But this poor offensive rope-walker has the excuse that he risks his own body in order to maintain the bodies of others; whilst they who, satirized in "The Season," outrage by "their fantastic tricks" the dignity of humanity, have not even the insufficient plea of an empty purse: all that they can appeal to for their justification is a shallow heart or a vacant brain.

This it was, I conceived, that stood—that stands yet—in such imperative need of alteration. All that I have attempted has been to make people see it—not such as it strives to seem, but—such as it really is: to see it, not through the delicious dreamy atmosphere of gauze, but with this wanton bewildering gauze torn pitilessly off. Is a *reductio ad absurdum* illegitimate

in verse? “*Les Amours de Diane*,” says the Covent Garden play-bill. No! say I: “*Salvioni’s legs*.” The phraseology of the play-bill is elegant, but it is a sham, a blind—out with it!—a lie. My phraseology is startling and unpleasant, but—true. Call a spectacle by the classical and abstract title of “*Diana’s loves*,” and who shall not go and have a look at it? But call this same spectacle by the name I have given it—its real name, mind you,—and who is going—I will not say, as some folks say, to take these little ones, but—who is going at all? This I said in “*The Season* ;” this I say again ; to this I appeal as my complete justification.

- To be colloquial, but laconic: “*Here*,” I
- say, “is a disease, a death-bringing wind, and its name is *Scirocco*.” “Not a bit of it,” I get for answer ; “it is no disease, no killing blast, but a pleasant holiday breeze, and its true appellation, if you want

to know, is Zephyrus, or the West Wind." Turning about to get this matter solved, what reply do I receive? Why, this: "Well, well, it *is* the scirocco, but for God's sake" (for God's sake!) "don't say so: it is an ugly word, and it frightens folks, and you had better call it West Wind too."

Now, I will *not* call it West Wind. I have a much fiercer objection to ugly things than to ugly words; and if I can but frighten some people into an honest recognition of what they are doing, even a more brutal charge than that of "ingrained depravity" will not disturb me from my charitable mission.

Between facts and their forms, between reality and appearance, between behaviour and language, there is at present woeful estrangement: most people are trying hard to stretch the estrangement into a

permanent divorce; and neither by the gentle appeals of the mistaken, the sneers of the indolent, nor the monotonous vocabulary of the interested, will I be baulked of my purpose to bring about something like a reconciliation. I have said nothing new: I have said what has been said by hundreds of others; only, I have said it differently. But of all those who have said it, I verily believe I am about the first who has ever got himself listened to. Had I written with the grave decorum of a secluded moralist, I too should have gone down into the limbo of forgotten bores.

This last word provokes me into pausing. I have much to say upon this matter, but will refrain from saying more upon it here. I am very young to teach, so will fortify my position with a grave quotation from an Elder. It is a Father of the Church,—if my memory serve me with customary fidelity,

C'

B

it is St. Jerome,—who says, “If an offence come of the Truth, better the offence come than the Truth be concealed.” Offence has come of “The Season;” but if, as I believe, Truth, practically concealed, have through it obtained some slight recognition, authorized by St. Jerome, I claim for myself a proportionate absolution.

Some words I have altered: some lines I have expunged: not (I must be honest) from conviction, but from deference. I am not virtuous enough altogether to resist the perplexing arguments of a gentle hand, nor the convincing sophistry of a musical human voice. Thanks, unutterable thanks, to all such persuasive critics, even if they have led me astray! From the general life, from the promiscuous struggle, in which, it would appear, the purposes of the Great Arrangement can be attained only by each one’s hitting hard and being hard hit back in turn, how pleasant and surely how profitable is it to



seek in the individual life for the pathetic courtesies of affectionate disagreement. There, without weakening our healthy animosity against what we conceive to be wrong, we can lovingly congregate with those who conceive it to be eternally right : there, though ready at the summons to strike, armour-buckled, in the behoof of Man, we are forced to acknowledge that men also have their claim : there, getting our gaping wounds bound up, we confess that our necessities are human, if our aspirations are divine.

So it is that lose we cannot. I believe that I have wounded some : I am quite sure that some have wounded me ; but depend upon it, whichever cause be right, that cause has been advanced by the clash. And of all the friends whom, three months back, I prized as my chief personal wealth, I have not suffered, save by death, the deprivation of one ; whilst I have added

to them others, valued not less because they were more lately found, nor likely, on that account, I trustingly pray, to be less lastingly retained.

Must I apologize for this garrulous egotism? There are many whom I wished to address, and for my life I could not have spoken to them what, consequently, I have written here.

ALFRED AUSTIN.

2, TANFIELD COURT, TEMPLE,

*June 23rd, 1861.*

## THE SEASON.

---

I SING the Season. Muse ! whose sway extends  
Where Hyde begins beyond where Tyburn ends :  
Muse ! not like vulgar Muses, known and nude,  
Who look the trollop yet who act the prude,  
But draped discreetly in a skirt and vest  
Which just withhold the secrets they suggest :  
Muse, at whose toilet (sure the sweetest shrine)  
Rimmel presents his last "pommade divine :"  
Mistress avowed where'er Man's lofty brain  
Invents a colour or conceals a stain :  
Muse, earth-begot ! equipped from hip to heel.  
In loose array of penetrable steel :

Fashion yclept ! without whose granted spell  
No critic praises and no verses sell,  
Accept my couplets ; make my strains select,  
Parade each beauty, powder each defect ;  
So that my lines, quick, sparkling as your eyes,  
Storm the Town's Circles with a swift surprise !

Why sing the Season ? cautious critics say :  
Why write a Satire ?—only Epics pay.  
The world grows earnest, and no more endures  
A dilettante flippant pen like yours.  
Sing of the Zodiac ! the Creator's Mind !  
The past—the future—Mansions of Mankind !  
The secret spheres of blessedness or woe !  
Sing all, sing any—save the one you know.  
Shriek—start—pant—palpitate—pause—prove to  
men  
There is some splendid purpose in your pen.

Convert your cut-throats, leave your Phrynes  
chaste;

Flaunt moral diamonds (who will know they're  
paste ?) :

Compete with Meredith : \* discreetly steal

Your plot, your apophthegms, and top " Lucile ! "

---

\* I would point out to Mr. Owen Meredith, that in one serious particular he has overlooked parental admonition. In one of those charming conversations, prefixed to each Book of " My Novel," Pisistratus Caxton combats the idea of his relations, that he can make the personages of his story act and talk just as it pleases him. He urges with admirable force that, once started on a certain path, the author has no control over the destination of his characters. They must be dramatically consistent with themselves. Goethe means the same thing when he says, " A man's history is his character." Had Owen Meredith even a glimpse of this truth, we should have been spared the final tableau of repentance and forgiveness which concludes " Lucile." Really, men and women—men certainly—are not in the habit of repenting in the ridiculously promiscuous manner attributed to them from, I suppose, some preconceived notions of morality. Why may not a few at least be allowed to remain in ideal histories, as

Spawn bastard spondees spuriously Greek,  
 With modern tawdry drape the grand Antique,  
 Olympus vulgarize with clumsy care—  
 Cambridge rewarded Kingsley<sup>b</sup> with a Chair.

---

most, who have ever been, remain in real life, wicked to the last?

<sup>b</sup> "Andromeda and other Poems" has attained to the honours of a second edition. Clergymen seem to be privileged. Even had we boys—*nous autres*—written and published

"As long as lips grow ripe to kiss," &c.

and

"Kiss me but once and I go. Then raising her neck  
 like a sea-bird

"Peering up over the wave, from the foam-white swells  
 of her bosom

"Blushing, she kissed him :"

not even the plea of our "hot youth" and irresponsible position would have saved us from the denunciations of the orthodox : but a "saint in crape" who, if lucky, may become a "saint in lawn," advertises these erotic effusions side by side with "Good News from God," and is not only pardoned but applauded, and not only applauded but recompensed. The Chair of Modern History at Cambridge is occupied by this reverend rhymester.

Or write blank verse: it moveth more severe :  
Moral your metre, if your views be queer ;  
And hint, from 'neath a philosophic hood,  
The "Social Evil" 's for the social good.  
Throw in some politics, some art, and see  
What are your chances 'gainst "Aurora<sup>c</sup> Leigh."

---

<sup>c</sup> Will Mrs. Barrett Browning pardon me for saying that I entertain for her genius great admiration? She is the only English Poetess who can be justified by Mr. John Stuart Mill's ordeal. In his dissertation on Alfred de Vigny, he says:—

"The gems alone of thought and fancy are worth setting with the finished and elaborate workmanship of verse : and even of them, only those whose effect is heightened by it."

But its many gems of thought and fancy, and complimentary criticisms thereon despite, "Aurora Leigh" is not—and no one could make it—a Poem. Her "Poems before Congress" have been roughly handled: I will not praise them ; but I will assure her that her opinions, not her versification (both heterodox enough, doubtless), were the front of her offending. She is living in Italy : and so she will perhaps be willing to learn, from one still in England, that silly stanzas have a chance of gaining

*These* are the bards ; for these Apollo's chair,  
His bays for these, and none but these shall wear.

Thanks, thanks, my friends ! but all the world  
can give

I care to take, is—liberty to live.

Frankly : I want nor chaplet, chair, nor crown,  
But only leave to dawdle through the Town ;  
Pass where wit flags, delay where it abounds—  
Here, take my arm, and let us go the rounds.

---

favour, but heretical politics not even a hearing. Englishmen are not altered since Burke wrote, in his "Vindication of Natural Society :"—

"A man is allowed sufficient freedom of thought, provided he knows how to choose his subject properly. You may criticise freely upon the Chinese constitution, and observe with as much severity as you please upon the absurd tricks or destructive bigotry of the Bonzees. But the scene is changed as you come homeward, and atheism or treason may be the name given in Britain to what would be reason and truth, if asserted of China."



One word, my comrade ! Let this point be  
clear :

Know that I never condescend to sneer.

He who unwisely, be he man or boy,

Begins to scoff, soon ceases to enjoy.

See wanton bees their senseless mischief rue :

They leave their sting, but oft their bowels too.

Who part with these survive but ill the strife :

Compassion is a requisite of Life.

I am no cynic saturate with spleen,

Existence eyeing through a film of green,

To all offensive and whom all offend,

No surly censor, but a frolic friend.

Where is the laugh ? At him—at you—at  
me :

Each meets disaster ; all should share the glee.

Fool ! to stand crying o'er your broken delf !

The laugh will lessen if you laugh yourself.

I rail at Fashion, prate of Folly, but  
This sleeve capacious is the newest cut.  
Say you, when Bolus comes to cure your sneeze,  
“Physician ! look you at your own disease ?”  
Bennett’s *my* Gibus, Houbigant’s my glove—  
Yet, let me lash the follies that I love.  
A scourge so silken need evoke no spleen ;  
We laugh the more, unless the joke be seen.

Returning shadows now divide the street :  
Free now the Mall from all but Party heat :  
Gone the broad glare, save where with borrowed  
bays  
Some female Phaeton sets the Drive ablaze ;  
Or, more defiant, spurning frown and foe,  
With slackened rein swift Skittles <sup>d</sup> rules the Row.

---

<sup>d</sup> Social celebrity travels slowly. Hence, fair readers who reside wholly in the Provinces may be puzzled by

Though scowling matrons champing steeds re-  
strain,

She flaunts Propriety with flapping mane.

Dear fledgeling damsels ! come from country  
nest

To nibble, chirp, and flutter in the West,

Whose clear fresh faces, with their fickle frown

And favour, start like Spring upon the Town :

Less dear, for damaged, damsels ! doomed to  
wait,

Whose third—fourth?—season makes half des-  
perate,

---

this passage ; but to their Sisters of the Season, Skittles is as well known, and as much an object of interest, as the last shape of Madame Elise ; and the skill with which in talk *à deux* they manœuvre the conversation into speculations upon her origin, abode, and doings, fully supports their reputation for tact.

Welling with warmth, less potent hour by hour  
(As magnets heated lose attractive power) :  
Or you ! nor dear nor damsels, tough and  
    tart,  
Unmarketable maidens of the mart,  
Who, plumpness gone, fine delicacy feint,  
And hide your sins in piety and paint :  
Answer me, all ! belle, heiress, flirt, and prue !  
Who has our notice ? Skittles more or you ?  
“ The nasty wretch ! regard her saucy leer ! ”  
Well, own her conquest, and I'll own it queer.

Withal, *not* queer . . . I am, I must insist,  
A most uncompromising moralist.  
Wit, frankness, beauty, natural quests of Man,  
Provoke his instincts since the world began :  
His fine keen scent, evading social skill  
To hedge him out, is sure to trespass still.

No barn-door game, by fluttering mothers reared,  
Cooped up from dangers genuine or feared,  
Whose wings are clipped to fortify control,  
Afford the sport that satisfies the soul.  
Is it a marvel, Man's more liberal mood  
Should beat the wilds where Nature rears her brood,  
Along forbidden border forests roam,  
Seeking the breeze he cannot find at home?  
Go, girls! to Church! believing all you hear,  
Think that their lack of virtue makes them dear;  
Unheeding me who say that ban and bar  
Make you the stupid stunted things you are;  
That both would better, more applauded, be,  
Had they your virtue, you their liberty.  
But since restraint is privilege from blame,  
And loss of fetters is a loss of fame,  
Preferring freedom, these forego respect;  
Repute *your* choice, you smart beneath neglect.

Alternative ordained by Moral Plan—

To sulk, a doll, or smile, a courtesan !

Incongruous group, they come: the judge's  
hack

With knees as broken as its rider's back :

The counsel's courser stumbling through the  
throng

With wind e'en shorter than its lord's is long :

The statesman's versatile but cautious cob,

That, like its master, sometimes stoops to job :

The foreign Marquis's accomplished colt

Sharing its owner's tendency to bolt :

The—nay enough ; let Cowper's\* care attest

The worth and vast importance of the rest.

---

\* William Cowper, First Commissioner of Public Works.

Rise, Britons ! rise, ye patriot vestries ! call  
For monster meetings in St. Martin's Hall !  
Rush to the rescue ! Shall the Board of  
Works

Treat sons of Hampden like Malays or Turks ?  
Pym ! Magna Charta ! Bill of Rights ! Bow-  
wow !

You won our liberties : preserve them now !  
Heavens ! what a hubbub doth the Town divide !  
A Revolution ?—no, a lengthened Ride.

Oh, spare the spot where timid maidens hie  
A string to loosen or a swain to tie,  
And, favoured by the shy secretive shade,  
Prompt the proposal dalliance delayed :  
Where tear-dewed lids, choked utterance, sobs  
suppressed,  
Coax the confession from a dawdler's breast ;

Whence they, who vainly haunted rout and ride,  
Emerge triumphant by a Suitor's side.

Come, let us back, and whilst the Park's alive,  
Lean o'er the railings and inspect the Drive.  
Look! as we turn, most loved of all her Line,  
If not by Right, by deeds at least divine,  
By Nature's self equipped for kind command,  
Onward she comes, the Lady of the Land!  
Long may each zone its wealth profusely pour  
Upon her laplike, peace-protected shore!  
Long may the strain come swelling from the  
ships,  
Which keeps Victoria on a Nation's lips!  
Long, long in thousand eyes that smile be  
seen  
Which thinks her woman, though it hails her  
Queen:



Queen, wife, or mother, perfect in each part,  
And throned securely in a People's heart !

Still sweeps the long procession, whose array  
Gives to the lounge's gaze, as dips the Day,  
Its rich reclining and reposeful forms,<sup>f</sup>  
Still as bright sunsets after mists or storms,  
Who sit and smile, (their morning wranglings  
o'er,  
Or dragged and dawdled through one dull day  
more,)

---

<sup>f</sup> An intelligent Peruvian, whom I once took into Hyde Park, expressed himself much shocked at the indolent attitudes of our maids and matrons *sans reproche* : yet he was a descendant of the very people whose shameless customs Locke, in his "Essay on the Human Understanding," quoting from Garcilaso de la Vega, adduces, in order to prove that there are "no innate practical principles." The indignant criticism of the descendant of the Tououpinambos would seem to fortify Locke's theory, though by a retaliatory instance.

As though the life of widow, wife, and girl  
Were one long lapsing and voluptuous whirl.  
O poor pretence ! what eyes so blind but see  
The sad, however elegant, ennui ?  
Think you that blazoned panel, prancing pair,  
Befool our vision to the weight they bear !  
The richest ribbon, best-lined parasol,  
Screen not the woman, though they deck the doll.  
The padded corsage and the well-matched hair,  
Judicious jupon spreading out the spare,  
Sleeves well designed false plumpness to impart,  
Leave vacant still the hollows of the heart.  
Is not our Lesbia lovely ? In her soul,  
Lesbia is troubled : Lesbia hath a mole :  
And all the splendour of that matchless neck  
Consoles not Lesbia for its single speck.  
Kate comes from Paris, and a wardrobe brings,  
To which poor Edith's are "such common things."

Her pet lace shawl has grown not fit to wear,  
And ruined Edith dresses in despair.

I fear there are who think my satire blind  
To all defects except the softer kind.  
Says saucy Maud : " You leave the *men* alone :  
Is it because their meanness is your own ? "  
Perhaps. But tell me : will you drop a hint  
About your sisters I may seize and print ?  
Would you to me the mysteries disclose  
Of Sophie's boudoir, diary of Rose,  
Or—ha ! you start !—your own arcana tell,—  
Gods ! how my verses would surprise and sell !  
But no : whilst men alarmedly declare  
" He hits too hard—it really is not fair "—  
You, they think hit, are laughing in your sleeves :  
" He thinks he *knows*." Well—honour among  
thieves.

So, though I own that even men have specks,  
Like you, I spare the secrets of my sex.  
And then, who sees—our eyes not thus de-  
signed—

His own base parts of body or of mind ?  
Though, chance, 'twere well if all, however loth,  
Caught now and then a passing glimpse of both.  
Still, by severe induction may we guess,  
If yours are great, our faults will scarce be less.

Besides : as Sex,\* in embryotic state,  
Is always female till a certain date,

---

\* This is a fact which the investigations of recent embryologists have made sufficiently certain. In the method of producing males, or sterile females, from the larvæ of bees, may be recognized an analogous if not an exactly similar occurrence. For a short but intelligible account, the reader may consult that popular work, the "Vestiges of Creation."

So are our manly virtues, be assured,  
But female vices only more matured ;  
And just as they, who, armed with lens and knife,  
Seek in our frames the principle of life,  
Find that the foetus best assists their aim,  
So have *I* found—*my* method is the same.  
We best shall learn from foetal forms ; besides,  
'Gainst forms developed Decency decides.  
Our Figleaf Age shrinks, cognizant of blame,  
From honest manhood with a sickly shame ;  
Though the whole difference moralists admire  
Is—Men but do what women all desire.

You doubt it ? Why, this moment, see a sign.  
All go : but these to dress, whilst those to dine.  
Divergence, think you ? Be not duped : their  
aim,  
In seeming diverse, is in substance same..

They each require and ply their sensual sport ;  
The one for praise, the others hunt for port.  
And all must own that neither act their best  
Till the half-drunk lean over the half-dressed.

O blessed moment ! . . . Critics ! duns !  
and Fate !

Do—do your hardest—but I dine<sup>b</sup> at eight.  
My thoughts are stolen ? and my lines are halt ?  
Well, very likely : please to pass the salt.  
Jones won't accept your bills : he funks the  
risk.

Does he ? By Heavens ! *potage à la bisque* !  
You recollect what Titus used to say ?  
Did Titus dine ? he *could not* lose a day.

---

<sup>b</sup> Qu'on me méprise, pourvu que je dine ! was the exclamation of one (which ?) of the revolutionary sensualists of A.D. 1789.

O dear old boy ! you ransack all the Rhine  
To line your bins, then make their contents  
mine.

Who would be rich, so long as he is young  
And boasts a generous but temperate tongue?  
I bring my hat, my anecdote, my laugh,  
And need but kindly criticise and quaff,  
Plutus repays my frequent presence here  
With grasp unchanging, ever-changing cheer.  
Long may the Gods preserve my palate clean  
To do due justice to his deft *cuisine* !  
And, O kind, compensating Time ! increase  
My Banker's Balance as my youth you fleece ;  
So that, a seasonable change at most,  
The slender guest may smile the portly host.  
And when, dear boys ! Life's Vintage slightly  
sours,  
With taste discreet and temper wholly ours,

Not even Death is able to deprave,  
Invert the wine-cup o'er a gourmet's grave !

Why, Life itself a dinner is indeed,  
Where each contributes so that all may feed.  
We all give something : some give more, some  
less ;  
None are excluded from the social mess :  
And he who finds the bread or beverage sour,  
Should send us better or should cease to lour.  
I hate your churls who strut, and sulk, and  
swear  
Go where they will they ever foully fare.  
Believe me, friend ! you'll always find that such  
Provide but little who exact so much.  
Your true cosmopolite, Life's well-bred guest,  
Scorns not plain dishes, though he serves the  
best ;



And should there hap disaster, even dearth,  
Mends the misfortune or the want with  
mirth.

Does not, when some rude grumbler mars the  
rout,

Instinctive justice mutter "Turn him out" ?  
Would we were rid of all whose gall deflowers  
Their own existence and would poison ours !

But—the clock strikes: the carriage waits: be  
trite.

Pocchini dances, Titiens sings, to-night.

Sure, you mistake ? For Lumley promise  
made

Of voice not heard, limbs never yet displayed.

Better and better: sharp's the word. The  
tier ?

The first of course—the best for eye and ear.

Gods! what a show! Right, left, the House is  
crammed:

Our new danseuse won't, here at least, be  
damned.

What is this living, passion-prompting zone

But Venus' Cæstus once again our own?

Who prates of rainbows? By this iris bold

Prismatic hues were colourless and cold.

Above, around, below, are houris' eyes,

Flashing with quick, intelligent surprise,

And houris' blushes rapidly respond

To murmurous whispers deftly dropped and fond,

Spread from the temples, eddy to the neck,

Break on the breast, and, turning at the check,

In ripples weaker rally from restraint,

Creep up the cheek and on the features faint.

Their rounded, pliant, silent-straying arms

Seem sent to guard, yet manifest their charms.

Mark how the lorgnettes cautiously they  
raise

Lest points, no pose so thoughtless but dis-  
plays,

A too quick curiosity should hide—

For they who gaze must gaze at be beside.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> "On voit une foule de petites mains, les unes prendre, les autres demander leur lorgnettes, lesquelles montent à la hauteur des yeux sans que le bras oublie la pose qu'il doit avoir pour être gracieux ; car tandis qu'on lorgne on peut être lorgnée, et il ne faut pas se laisser surprendre."

I trust that all will appreciate my generosity in pointing out what will doubtless now be called the source of my lines—though it certainly was not—as the extract is from "La Dame aux Perles," by Monsieur Alexandre Dumas, fils ; a book which honest folks would never think of reading, since it would probably be condemned to the purgatory (or hell, perhaps?) of Literature, designated by the *National Review* as "The Lowest Deep." Has the National Reviewer any idea that there is in Literature "than this lowest deep a lower deep?" and has he any suspicion what it is?

Now o'er the box their beauteous busts they  
bend,

A foe to welcome, criticise a friend,  
Unfolding or obscuring charms at will  
With all the calm unconsciousness of skill,  
Solving the doubt that sometimes will arise—  
Whilst women wantons are, can men be wise?  
Let your eyes stray from sensuous row to row  
Of nude parade, and flash an honest no!  
What can be Man's, whilst Woman deems *her*  
part  
To bare her bosom, but to hide her heart?

Hush! pretty prattlers! Waving arms apart,  
Æolus frees the fettered winds of Art.  
Be dumb, ye dawdlers! whilst his spells con-  
found  
The gathered—scattered—symphonies of sound.

Cymbals barbaric clang ; cowed flutes complain  
As the sharp, cruel clarion cleaves the strain :  
To drum deaf-bowelled, drowning sob and wail,  
Scared viols shriek, that pity may prevail ;  
Till, with tumultuous purpose, swift and strong,  
Sweeps the harmonious hurricane of Song !

The curtain lifts. Behold the “ Lost One ”<sup>k</sup> lain  
’Mid all the woes of suitors and champagne :  
Of the whole crowd the cynosure and queen,  
The best-dressed woman in this sumptuous scene.  
Wit—beauty—bearing—graciousness—restraint,  
Gifts few possess and none can wholly feint ;

---

<sup>k</sup> The story of “ La Traviata ” is too well known to require further reference than what is made to it in the Text. That the reference therein is faithful, may be tested by a glance at the Argument prefixed to the English version of the libretto, which epitomises the Lost One’s history.

Not wife, yet woman—hurt, but not debased—  
If vain, unselfish—modest, if not chaste ;  
Wealth, worship, fashion, prostrate at her feet,  
Yet fled with Alfred to profound retreat—  
For him the World abandoned quite, again  
For him endured the pantomime of men—  
Her life's one chance, one yearning, straight foregone,  
To save the father, sister, in the son—  
Wronged, as can wrong alone a lover's skill,  
For her fidelity, yet faithful still—  
Doomed by disease which modifies, not mars,  
Dying like light in some transparent vase—  
At last in Alfred's penitent embrace,  
Held to his heart and fondled to his face—  
Clinging to life, but with untroubled tone  
Claiming the Heaven of Virgins for her own<sup>1</sup>—

---

<sup>1</sup> In the last scene, Violetta, made acquainted with her

Is not this, nothing heightened, nothing glozed,  
The vocal Drama but this instant closed ?  
Hark ! how fresh plaudits plaudits fresh repeat,  
And purest posies kiss the "Lost One's"  
feet !

Do I complain our maidens should acquire  
Her story ? Ah ! I nought could *more* desire  
Than they should know, and, knowing, would  
reclaim  
At once their sex, their sisters, and their  
shame.

But by what moral or dramatic laws  
Bare you the consequence, but veil the cause ?

---

certain fate, exclaims in agony : "Great God ! to die so young !" But, submitting to the inevitable, she gives Alfred a portrait of herself, for the benefit of some future wife, whom he is to tell "that she who gave it thee, 'midst the Saints in Heaven, prays for her and thee."

D

Vicious results prompt vice, beheld alone :  
Let all be hidden or let all be known.  
The henbane's flower poisons whom it lures ;  
Pluck you but deeper, 'tis the root that cures,  
Whom noble still in infamy we saw,  
In frailty faithful, fair despite her flaw,  
Why was this woman with the world at  
    strife,  
Nor maid revered, nor consecrated wife ?  
Why the song silent on the only part  
Of her career that might instruct the heart,  
But that the story of her *early* years  
Were sure to stir (beyond those surface tears  
Which straightway dry beneath to-morrow's  
    drought).  
A fertile pity and an active thought ?  
And thus the partial Drama you applaud  
Is a mere flaunting falsity and fraud.



What is the spell that 'twixt a saint and sinner  
The difference makes ? a sermon ?—bah ! a  
dinner.

The odds and ends our silken Claras waste  
Would keep our calico Clarissas chaste.  
Celia ! the lace from off your parasol  
Had held Celinda's sunburnt virtue whole :  
A hundred pounds would coy have made the  
nude,  
A thousand pounds the prostitute a prude,  
And little more expenditure of pelf  
Fanny a bigot bitter as yourself !

Hence ! surpliced sophists ! who with fasts and  
cries  
Would fain compel Omniscience to be wise !  
What if, instead of craving drought or rain,  
You built a reservoir or delved a drain ?

Instead of prayers and platitudes demure,  
Diffused the wealth that keeps peers' daughters  
pure?

With scorn the stalwart pauper's prayers you  
spurn,

Yet whine to God for wage yourselves might  
earn.

There is nor tempest, torrent, drouth, nor wind,  
Which is not big with blessings to mankind ;  
And each fomenting passion in the breast  
Might add to life a sparkle and a zest :  
Yet those you let devastate and deflower,  
And these but make existence flat and sour !  
Blaspheming fools ! with shrieks the skies you  
rend

Against the very benefits they send ;  
And howl to God, Who meant you for divine,  
For grace to sink your species into swine !

This earth is man's : not God's, *except* as man's :  
And man 's the action in it that He plans.  
True to his scheme, He never intervenes :  
The end being human, human are the means.  
What is man's end ? To know and to be free.  
Think you to compass it by tracts and tea ?  
Labour<sup>m</sup> is prayer—the only prayer that serves—  
And all beside it but disordered nerves.  
Your God, you point to, paused not till He could  
Feel His work done, and see that it was good.  
Then did He rest. Your work done, so may  
you :  
But “days of rest,” whilst work remains to do !  
The hungry feed : the thirsty treat as kin :  
The naked clothe, and take the stranger in :

---

<sup>m</sup> Qui laborat, orat ; is one of the oldest aphorisms of the Catholic Church.

Visit the sick, the prison-house, the slum ;  
And then, "ye blessed of my Father, come !"  
Oh ! when shall Toil assert its proper price,  
At once prayer, fasting, alms, and sacrifice ?  
And Men the workers proffer, as they plod,  
A jubilation and a hymn to God ?

Truce to this moral thunder : for advance  
Fleet-footed laurelled Daphnes<sup>n</sup> of the Dance.  
What first but vaguely Opera designs,  
The Ballet next develops and defines :  
The sentimental to the sensuous grows,  
And pointless trilling into pointed toes.  
Now wake the fathers who securely slept  
Whilst Alfred wooed and Violetta wept,

---

<sup>n</sup> *Daphne*, a maiden loved and pursued by Apollo ; and when overtaken by the erotic Song-god, tantalizingly transformed into a laurel. The legend does not say if it was a prickly one ; but we may presume it was.

Rub up their spectacles and strain their gaze  
At bounding Zina dressed in shoes and stays :  
Now love-struck boys transfer their fickle eyes  
From Mary's trinkets to Morlacchi's thighs ;  
Whilst mothers, sisters, sweethearts, wives, ap-  
plaud  
The tight proportions of a twirling bawd.  
Must we then stop it ? no : unleash the Town  
To hunt a Nicholson or Warton down ; °  
The scent will take, the Cider Cellars close,  
And Haddo, <sup>p</sup> hoodwinked, not insist on hose.

---

° *Nicholson...Warton.* Caterers for the taste of what my hairdresser calls "the lower orders of people what exist." The owners of Walhallas, Rainbow Nymphs, Days of Rhodes revived, &c.

<sup>p</sup> Lord Haddo, now Earl of Aberdeen, has made violent efforts in the House of Commons to put a stop to the use of nude models in Schools of Art. I hope that I do not wrong his lordship in concluding that he extends his moral indignation to the nude, when exhibited before a larger and more public assemblage.

Thus, with the prudent chastity of clique,  
Protect the Ballet 'gainst the Poses Plastiques.

Whilst we, surveying this decorous stage,  
Admire the pastimes of a modest age,  
An errant curiosity, inquires  
Whither the Drama, England's boast, retires.  
Let bounding profligates their limbs display  
Where "further off" <sup>a</sup> chaste Hermia's lover  
"lay."

---

<sup>a</sup> SCENE—*A wood near Athens.*

*Hermia.*—But, gentle friend, for love and courtesy  
LIE FURTHER OFF ; in human modesty  
Such separation, as may well be said  
Becomes a virtuous bachelor and a maid,  
So far be distant ; and good night, sweet friend ;  
Thy love ne'er alter till thy sweet life end.

*Lysander.*—Amen, amen, to that fair prayer, say I ;  
And then end life, when I end loyalty.

(They sleep.)

*Midsummer Night's Dream.*

Let figurante trip where Siddons stepped,  
And jugglers ' grin where once Macready wept ;  
Yet High Art surely somewhere makes a stand.  
Somewhere ! Well, where ? in Wych Street or  
the Strand ?

Is it where saucy Wilton \* winks her way,  
And says the more the less she has to say ?  
Is it where Robson, servile to the Town,  
Discards the Actor and adopts the Clown ?  
Where Toole or Compton, perfect in his part,  
Touches each sense except the head and heart ?

---

\* By "Jugglers," I do not refer to the Administrative Reformers, who also performed at Drury Lane Theatre, but to the Chinese ditto, who delighted crowded houses by innocuously flinging knives at each others' heads.

\* Miss Marie Wilton is every way charming, and can act only in those parts which are written for her ; and it is no fault—but rather talent—of hers, that she creates a more lively sensation when she is not speaking than when she is.

Where mobs "recall" the wit of Rogers' wig,  
Applaud a pun and recompense a jig?  
Seek where you will, you still will fail to find  
More than a grinning, mountebank mankind.  
Conscious of paltry purpose or of none,  
No pride in winning, peace in having won;  
Craving a respite from pursuit of pelf,  
Our age in shows seeks shelter from itself.<sup>†</sup>  
It strains at mirth, but like abandoned Boy  
Debauched by sports that shatter whom they cloy,  
Has lost its healthy appetite for joy :  
And yet too slothful to arise and scan  
The splendid toils allotted to the Man,  
Toys with remorse, and as it supine lies,  
"Oh give me back my youth!" unblushing cries.

---

<sup>†</sup> Il faut des spectacles dans les grandes villes, et des romans aux peuples corrompus.—*Jean-Jacques Rousseau.*



Put out the lights : rub off the paint : the Play,  
Sir, is performed ; your carriage stops the way.  
Well then, good night : the morn will soon be up :  
You go to slumber ? No ! I go to sup.  
Bah ! I forgot. First Hansom ! double fare !  
Drive fast as Fate to 50, Belgrave Square."

Botanic Shows, where crowds and tactics  
tear  
Too yielding daughters from a mother's chair :  
Water excursions, when full boats divide  
Some pretty novice from a sister's side ;  
Or garden-fêtes, when, after absence spent—  
The whole time, really, in the public tent—

---

" One of my (I have many) literal friends comes and asks me, "Why 50, Belgrave Square?" And when I answer, "Because there are only *forty-nine* numbers," he goes away, offended at my rudeness.

An anxious niece a careless aunt pursues,  
Conscious of wrong, so ready to accuse :  
To these be honour ; but the Ball—the Ball—  
Combines, continues, and excels them all.  
Here, with complacency, strict matrons see  
Maids and Moss-troopers<sup>v</sup> polking, knee to knee.  
Their kindly gaze examines and exalts  
The closer contact of the chaster waltz.  
Look where they smile, the grey-haired guardians  
set  
To scout decorum, sanction etiquette.<sup>w</sup>

---

<sup>v</sup> "Free Lances" is a recognized pseudonym. Surely,  
"Moss-troopers" rings more like home coinage.

<sup>w</sup> I find by my "Spectator," that matters were not  
much better a hundred and fifty years ago ; for on the  
17th day of May, A.D. 1711, the following complaint is  
laid before him by one who says that he "is not yet old  
enough to be a fool :"—

"I was amazed to see my girl handled by and handling  
young fellows with so much familiarity ; and I could not

Louder, ye viols ! shrilly, cornets ! blow !

Who is this prophet that denounces woe ?

Whirl fast ! whirl long ! ye gallants and ye  
girls !

Cling closer still ; dance down these cursèd  
churls :

Be crowned, ye fair ! with poppies newly blown,

Fling loose your tresses, and relax your zone !

---

have thought it had been in the child. They very often made use of a most impudent and lascivious step, called 'setting,' which I know not how to describe to you, but by telling you that it is the very reverse of 'back to back.' At last, an impudent young dog bid the fiddlers play a dance called 'Moll Pately,' and after having made two or three capers, ran to his partner, locked his arms in hers, and whisked her round cleverly above ground in such a manner, that I, who sat upon one of the lowest benches, saw further above her shoe than I could think fit to acquaint you with. I could no longer endure these enormities ; wherefore, just as my girl was going to be made a whirligig, I ran in, seized on the child, and carried her home."

From floating gauze let dreamy perfumes rise,  
Infuse a fiercer fervour in your eyes !  
Whirl faster, closer, until passion's drouth  
Play in the tell-tale muscles of the mouth,  
The furious Circle bid a truce to masks,  
And Nature answer all that Nature asks !

Bless us and save us ! What tirade is this ?  
My choleric friend ! is anything amiss ?  
This scene, your anti-sensual strictures doom,  
Is not an Orgy, but——an auction-room.  
These panting damsels, dancing for their lives,  
Are only maidens waltzing into wives.  
Those smiling matrons are appraisers sly  
Who regulate the dance, the squeeze, the sigh,  
And each base cheapening buyer having chid,  
Knock down their daughters to the noblest  
bid.

An honest time there was, when girl and boy  
Might love and yet not jeopardize their joy ;  
When, in faint laughs were fainter whispers  
drowned,  
Yet was no ill suspected in the sound.  
'Chance, did they stray to sit and smile apart,  
No frowns arraigned their vagrancy of heart :  
Unfettered but unforced, instinctive Youth  
Erred into right, and trembled into truth.  
No jealous frames, no artificial fires,  
Stunted their growth, but hurried their desires.  
Their graceful fondness gradually grew,  
By drouth of absence, by reunion's dew ;  
Cheered by the sun, or saddened by the  
shower,  
On each it throve, and fretted into flower.  
Not e'en a parent prematurely pressed  
The yet young secret from a basking breast ;

Ripened by outer warmth, by inner sap,  
It fell, spontaneous, in a mother's lap.  
"You do not blame us, mother? will not part?  
'Tis not to-day I give him up my heart:  
He stepped across its threshold long before,  
And is its household god for evermore."  
Could he scarce yet sustain a husband's charge,  
(His fortune narrow, though his love was large,)  
He was not exiled by a venal Fate:  
A boy might work, a maiden sure might wait.  
Love mingled with the grave concerns of Life,  
Tempered the toil and sanctified the strife:  
No danger difficult, no hardship hard,  
Risked for the promise of that rich reward.  
It made his dullest drudgery divine,  
That brave resolve, "my darling shall be mine!"  
While she could feel she helped him in his part,  
Strengthened his purpose, purified his heart.

Till, aims accomplished, youth's brisk battle  
won,  
They rushed together, mystic Two-in-One.

How is it now? Morality's advance  
Demands for Love the strictest surveillance.  
We banish with the glare of vulgar eyes  
The lights and shadows of Love's coy disguise :  
Rude ears invade—(Propriety insists)—  
Her would-be secret, solitary lists ;  
Spoil all her tender tourney ; put to rout  
Those skilful skirmishers the heart sends out  
In boldly-cautious converse, to make known  
Another's weakness, but to screen its own :  
No sweet lane-loiterings, no twilight strolls,  
Induce the gradual intercourse of souls.  
Two Balls—three Dinners—one Botanic Fête—  
“ You mean to try the matrimonial state ?

Sir! your intentions? Marry, or depart;  
You must not trifle with my daughter's heart."  
"I did intend, but—truth to tell—as yet  
My means are—" "Hold! you mean you are  
in debt.

You're much mistaken, let me tell you, sir!  
If you conceive you'll ever marry *her*."  
He goes: consoles himself as best he can:  
And she? she marries money and a man.  
A female and no fortune—it is just;  
So Love is nought but luxury and lust.  
Hard words? hard laws. The words have been  
revised:  
There are some sores which must be cauterized.\*

---

\* I am haunted by the belief that Voltaire has somewhere said the same thing. However, it is so true, that it is worth saying again; especially to people to whom Voltaire is more or less a sealed writer.



Just as unskilled equestrians restrain  
All healthful action, but give vice the rein,  
So do these social laws unwisely err :  
They check the angel, but the demon spur  
Making e'en kindly courtesies a curse,  
Manners no better and our morals worse.

You knew Blanche Darley ? could we but once  
more  
Behold that belle and pet of '54 !  
Not e'en a whisper, vagrant up to Town  
From hunt or race-ball, augured her renown.  
Far in the wolds sequestered life she led,  
Fair and unfettered as the fawn she fed :  
Caressed the calves, coquetted with the colts,  
Bestowed much tenderness on turkey poults,  
Bullied the huge ungainly bloodhound pup,  
Tiffed with the terrier, coaxed to make it up :

The farmers quizzed about the ruined crops,  
The fall of barley, and the rise of hops :  
Gave their wives counsel, but gave flannel too,  
Present where'er was timely deed to do ;  
Known, loved, applauded, prayed for far and  
wide—

The wandering sunshine of the country side.  
So soft her tread, no nautilus that skims  
With sail more silent than her liquid limbs.  
Her hair so golden that, did slanting eve  
With a stray curl its sunlight interweave,  
Smit with surprise, you gazed but could not  
guess

Which the warm sunbeam, which the warmer  
tress.

Her presence was low music : when she went,  
She left behind a dreamy discontent,  
As sad as silence when a song is spent.

She came—we saw—were conquered : one and  
all,

We donned the fetters of delicious thrall ;  
We fetched, we carried, dawdled, doffed, and did,  
Just as our Blanche the beautiful would bid.  
Such crowds petitioned her at every ball  
For “just one waltz,” she scarce could dance  
at all !

Besieged her card with such intrigues and  
sighs,

It might have been the pass-book to the skies.  
We lost our heads. Have women wiser grown ?  
A marvel surely, had she kept her own.

But brief our madness. Had we heard the  
news ?

Vaux has proposed. Vaux ! reeking from the  
stews ;

That remnant, Vaux ! shrunk, tottering, palsied,  
wan !

An Earl by right, by courtesy a man.

That soldier-sycophant, with seam and scar  
Gashed deep, but not in battle's joyful jar !

He with the cannon's never blent his breath,  
Nor gaily galloped up the gaps of death :

Too rich to roam, in bloodless fields and fights  
A lie at Brooks's, black-ball drops at White's.

Senilely supple if you lure or warn,

Now prowls the Quadrant, now confers with  
Kahn.

Romantic boys ! be still. Will angry names  
Like "battered beast" annul an Earldom's  
claims ?

Life is not wholly sentiment and stars :

Venus wed Mercury as well as Mars.

Hush your lewd tattle ! seek your slighted  
beds !

A cornet waltzes, but a colonel weds.

The Countess comes. Before her marriage  
vow,

Only men praised her : women praise her now.

See what avail a carriage and a pair !

You lose a lover, but—you gain a stare.

The world, to kindly compensation prone,  
Gives you its honour when you lose your own.

Corrupt in heart, in head-dress if correct,  
Our well-bred race rewards you with respect.

Who more respected than my Lady Vaux ?

The Town collects and wonders as she walks.

What if the Earl be absent from her side,  
Whilst others near it—gouty Earls must ride.

Let those, whose line but yesterday began,  
Crave for the coarse capacities of man ;

Vaux gave his wealth, his peerage, Blanche her  
face—

Your vulgar wants invade not Chesham Place.

Is it so sad to have one's husband old ?

The mother's milk but mars the maiden's mould ;

And Blanche, whilst fruitful spouses fade so fast,

Shall bear her barren beauty to the last !

What ! . . So they say . . Bah ! Nonsense . .

But it's true :

True, sure enough—will lay you ten to two.

Jack saw the brief, Respondent's name en-  
dorsed. . . .

Great God in heav'n ! Blanche Vaux to be  
divorced !

O scalding shame ! that name, last season's toast,  
Is never mentioned, or is mourned at most ;

Save where lewd lawyers, on their benches  
perched,  
In joke obscene send round the name that's  
smirched;  
Or, fouler still, amidst lascivious roar,  
The Coal-Hole<sup>y</sup> travesties one trial more !

But what of Frank ? to whom she early gave  
Her love, that guardian-angel sent to save :  
To whose kind counsels would we list alone,  
We ne'er should dash our foot against a stone.  
A truer, braver bosom never throbbed  
Than that poor boy's, whom fashion foully robbed.

---

<sup>y</sup> In the "Coal-Hole" is, or was, held a mimic Court of Law, under the presidency of Baron Nicholson, with the avowed occupation of parodying celebrated Matrimonial Causes.

In camps begot, his earliest desire  
Turned to the sabre of his slaughtered sire.  
But Peace, oppressive Peace, becalmed the world :  
Fluttered no pennon, not a wave was curled.  
When would War's lances tear the welkin  
dun ?

When battle's bugles summon up the sun ?  
The barrack life in stagnant country town,  
The bootless charge o'er undefended down,  
He chafed at all—court-martial, march, parade,  
And almost cursed the choice himself had  
made.

He met with Blanche. Complaint began to cease :  
Who knows ? Her smile might compensate for  
Peace.

He was too poor to prate as one that woos,  
But not—who is?—too poor to love and lose.



That devil Circumstance, who smooths the way  
To those who "may not," blocks to those who  
"may,"

Threw them together : wheresoe'er they went,  
They met as though by purposed accident.  
A pettish parting by a wicker gate  
Unsealed their secret but to seal their fate.  
He called her back : she turned on him her  
eyes

With a most swift significant surprise,  
Gazed straight into his soul, that moment bare,  
And saw her own bright image trembling there ;  
But in that gaze unmasked she to his view  
Eyes that, though piercing his, reflected too !

Did they not part ? Ah ! lips, which once have  
kissed,  
Are impotent to reason or resist.

Who ne'er was tempted knows not how to  
teach,

And he who falls will soon forget to preach.

The Scribe may scowl, the Pharisee may chide—

But Human Nature's always Justified.

Did they not part? When Europe's wild alarms  
Tore him from hers to Conflict's sterner arms,  
And proud fair England gave her boys to guard  
From Tartar maw what Turkish lust hath marred,  
Joyful he went: ere long he would return,  
Whom most would sigh for, none besought would  
spurn.

The foe-fleshed hand, the decorated brow,  
Might seize the spoil they dared not sue for, now.

In the Light Charge the gallant won his spurs,  
And prized his laurels, since his laurels hers.

Now might he write, and with unchallenged claim  
Fling at her feet the fulness of his fame.  
I saw that bright broad face shrink cold and hard :  
Blanche Darley's answer ?—Lady Vaux's card !

A first babe draining a young mother's breast,  
A kneeling Catholic maiden just confessed,  
Are not more pure, more welcome to the  
wise,  
Than hapless Love in Courtesy's disguise.

How courteous he ! A smile, a look, from  
Blanche  
Swayed him as breeze a young lithe willow  
branch.  
Yet none could guess, save only those who knew,  
What flogged-down fondness whined and crouched  
from view.

No longer love, but worship, warped his mind ;  
He held her holy—worship made him blind.  
He did not see, what others saw and scanned,  
A rich prize ready for the boldest hand.  
Or seeing, spared the Fruit of Good-and-Ill,  
With *Her* to dwell within his Eden still ;  
Perchance not jealous now that man and  
    wife,  
Plucking, had proved the nakedness of life.  
Oh, what a dawn, when first he waked to own  
He walked his fond Fool's Paradise—alone !

He who, despite his sorely-baffled aim,  
Survived his loss, could not survive her shame.  
In that vast Empire fastened on by fraud,  
And since by clanking sabres overawed,  
Rebellion brake like storm-clouds in the night !  
He asked a sword, and hurried to the fight ;

Rang out the war-cry with his Spartan wont—  
“Cravens to rear! rough-riders to the front!”  
Stern to the last, stemmed triumph’s torrent  
tide;  
And if unconquering, unconquered died.

But Blanche? Oh! surely the unblemished  
snow  
Was not—Hush! Hush! Enough for you to  
know  
That she, who once such curt refusal gave  
To share Frank’s bed, would gladly share his  
grave.

Darkness retreats, its misty banners furled;  
The Sun’s couched lances scour along the world.  
Skulk to your beds, ye Bacchanals of Night!  
The Day stalks in and stares upon your rite.

On wine-stains, crumpled wreaths, and clammy  
lips,

And eyes bedimmed with surfeit's foul eclipse,  
On cheeks where roses blown have ceased to  
smile,

Or stay to show how false they were the while,  
On slattern hair, whose short thin wisps make  
known

How much of former fulness was its own,  
On broken fans and irritated corns,  
Brows steeped in sweat that earns not nor  
adorns:

Away! away! let sleep—such sleep as hies—  
To Fashion's fagged yet feverish votaries—  
With lurements fresh to-morrow's limbs invest,  
And friendly paint and padding do the rest.\*

---

\* Written with whatever dissimilar meaning, the lines

Why further follow, flogging Fashion's faults?  
The Muse will flag, but Folly never halts.  
Write as I will, the prurience of men  
Invents new vice, to paralyze my pen.  
From class to class the mummery descends:  
I seek in vain for contrast or for friends.  
All ranks to equal turpitude aspire;  
Those make the mode, these mimic in the mire.  
See salon morals vagrant on the flags,  
Vice's torn tawdry shown as Virtue's rags,  
Pure, simple Woman, brazen, scented, curled,  
And God-like Man, the clothes-horse of the  
world!

---

of Ovid upon Echo may, without strain, be applied to the  
disordered figures of three o'clock in the morning.

Et neque jam color est misto candore rubori;  
Nec vigor, et vires, et quæ modo visa placebant;  
*Nec corpus remanet.*

Who think by verse to better make the bad,  
I grant it freely, must be vain or mad.  
From Horace downwards, monitory rhymes  
Have but amused and mended not the times.  
Yet in an Age when each one strives to hide  
The scorn he feels for every one beside,  
I claim the precious privilege of youth,  
Never to speak except to speak the truth.  
Urge you that youth should ne'er presume to scold,  
Since Satire suits the wise alone, and old,  
Ah ! age is not invariably nice,  
And wisdom oft grows lenient to vice.  
Besides : much more impartially the boy  
May scowl at sports himself could yet enjoy.  
Perforce should impotent repentant rake  
Denounce the havoc he no more can make,  
Dyspeptic pauper against feasts protest  
His purse can't reach, his stomach can't digest,



Or paralytic moralists condemn  
The lips that now no longer lust for *them*,  
Would you not say the fable of the grapes  
Fitted these censors in their sober shapes?  
Not rich nor beggared, blasé nor a child,  
Not quite unblemished, yet not quite defiled,  
Neither too old to want, too young to win,  
Acquainted but not surfeited with sin,  
A guest sometimes where meats and wines abound,  
And yet, thank God! my head and stomach  
    sound,  
Rich human blood redundant in my veins,  
And Beauty's bounties my most grateful gains,  
By none befooled, I abdicate my age  
To lash the pastimes which my peers engage.

Let purists frowning at my verse pretend  
To mourn the means and not to see the end,

Deny the sore, so deprecate the knife—  
But as our ballet, so our social life.  
Whilst quite enough is deftly bared to sight  
To lend to lust a lecherous delight,  
As deftly too is just so much obscure  
As makes the good (but timid) half endure.  
Strip off this insincerity of gauze  
Which baulks the hiss and sanctions the applause.  
Perchance—and thither is my satire aimed—  
When *all* is naked, *some* will feel ashamed.

Welcome release ! The Season gasps and dies,  
And Fashion's Crowd to seaside quarters flies.  
What though the Tide's uncompromising roar  
Thunders its truths, terrific, on the shore,  
Deaf to its voice, they only there prolong  
The kill-time shifts recorded in my song.

Not them I follow : but that dear old beach  
Will I seek out, where, far beyond the reach  
Of flirts and flippants, will the faithful foam  
Fawn at my feet and gambol round my home.  
Vagrant, I surely shall the lesson learn,  
To prize results, but recompense to spurn ;  
Since every breaker, how supreme soe'er  
The wealth its individual bosom bear,  
Impelled by no poor egotist desires,  
To the community of waves retires  
Wholly as undistinguished as before,  
When it has cast its corals on the shore.

THE END.

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# MY SATIRE AND ITS CENSORS.

By ALFRED AUSTIN,

*Author of "The Season: a Satire."*

## OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

It does not seem to have occurred to Mr. Austin, while perusing the not unamusing, though very onesided, diatribe, on which we commented a few weeks since, that there was anything in the literary world on which satire might fasten with as mordant a tooth as that with which he attacked the belles of the ball-room and the loungers at the opera. Since the appearance, however, of a certain critique, in the columns of a contemporary, who stigmatized him as "essentially coarse," and charged him with what Pitt called "the unpardonable crime of being a young man,"—the late censor of the equestrians in the Ride has discovered that there is "something rotten in the state" of Paternoster-row, and, following the example of Byron, has turned round and assailed by name, with some vigour and no small amount of vituperation, the editor and staff of the journal which stung him the most severely. He has printed the criticism in question, in an appendix, and gives in an advertisement, a number of other reviews of his work, including our own. The former is, no doubt, rather galling in tone, but any impartial person who looks at it will allow that the blots to which it calls attention are really such, and that the language reprehended is, to use the author's own words, rather that of the "frolic friend," who "lashes the follies that he loves" than that of the indignant Abdiel, who uncompromisingly forsakes what he cannot succeed in converting. The latter character has a justification for strong and plain language which is wanting in the case of the former; and of this we suspect Mr. Austin has become aware, since his present work, though as vigorous in tone, is much less objectionable in expression; though even here there are metaphors and allusions which, as the excellent Mr. Bowdler says, "could not with propriety be read aloud in a family." It is observable that all the criticisms upon "The Season" are not reprinted in the same unutilized form as that extracted from the *Athenæum*. We should have thought that so fearless a gentleman as Mr. Austin might have afforded to place all objections to him upon record with an equal impartiality; but can only hope the omission implies that he will in future pay increased attention to the amendment of the defects alluded to.

It is to be regretted that Mr. Austin has been led, by his animosity to our contemporary, to narrow the scope of a satire which might well have taken a somewhat extended range, and done some good service. His present attempt is not general enough in its idea to redeem it from the charge of being a merely splenetic effusion prompted by the soreness of the wounded author. In the abuses of literature and criticism he had a great opportunity, of which he has availed himself to but a trifling extent, and he has thus the air of having made literature in general merely ancillary to the purpose of flagellating Mr. Hepworth Dixon and his staff. There is plenty, in the literary world, to be satirized, in every generation, and it would have been no discredit to follow more closely in the steps of Byron, and hold up to ridicule the absurdity, the false taste, and the pretentious mediocrity of much which now holds a high place in public estimation. A few of Mr. Austin's epigrammatic lines would have acted as tin kettles to the tails of many too dull, or too lively dogs, whom soberer criticism vainly endeavours to castigate. To use his own words, "Errors, like geese, beheaded, run about." But, though he employs a great deal of strong language, he has not done a commensurate amount of execution. His range of topics is limited, and his knowledge of the literature of the day not sufficiently deep or wide to enable him to deal even with those selected in the most telling manner. It is not our business to overhaul the criticisms of our contemporaries, but we fancy that a better acquaintance with such matters than Mr. Austin possesses, might have shown him instances of blundering and partiality on which the lash would not have been thrown away. Among questions not of a simply literary character, the Turnbull affair, in

which the *Athenæum* led the onslaught, might reasonably have demanded a little of Mr. Austin's attention, and we confess we should have sympathized with him if he had dwelt upon such points, which we certainly do not when he rakes up the editor's early history and his unsuccessful drama.

Mr. Austin gives currency to the notion which occurs in *Pendennis* that the critic usually sells the book when he has reviewed it, and dines on the proceeds,—which sounds amusing in a satire, but which he must know to be, as regards the general practice, very wide of the truth. He also repeats the favourite notion of persons annoyed by criticism, that critiques are usually written by men who have failed as original authors and dramatists, which, looking even to the men he mentions as part of the *Athenæum* staff is certainly incorrect. We think him also mistaken in the view expressed in the following lines :—

But, on the Bard who, yoked to sluggish team,  
Does the World's work, whate'er the world may deem,  
Should bays be placed to make his toil less sore,  
These dungfly critics only buzz the more.

If he looks at the poetry which has been praised, *ad nauseam*, of late years by the reviewers, but which has not met with equal acceptance by the public at large,—he will, we are sure, reconsider this opinion. Criticism generally errs on the side of leniency in this respect, and many a volume to which a string of the most laudatory "opinions of the press" is appended, the world very willingly allows to die.

When Mr. Austin has finished vilipending the reviewers as a body, he tells us that exceptions to his censure are to be found, and names three gentlemen, in some lines of graceful eulogy. When we examine the pretensions of the few righteous men who are to save this critical Sodom from utter condemnation, we are surprised to find that only one, namely Mr. Hannay, is known to the public at large, as distinguished from the literary circles of the metropolis, in a way entitling him to be mentioned without a note; and he is better known as a wit, novelist, and essayist, than as a critic. We are sure, however, that neither of the three would desire to be complimented at the expense of the whole class to which they belong,—a class always sure to meet with an ample share of abuse, but containing, as Mr. Austin will find when he knows more about them, as great a number of conscientious and careful workmen as any other profession.

Mr. Austin's satire—apart from its hostility to the *Athenæum*—wears a somewhat indeterminate air; he seems to strike as fancy or resentment may dictate, and though he appears to admire the works of Messrs. Bailey, Dobel, and Massey, we should have been equally prepared to find him decrying them. Had he any positive standard of literary taste, he would have lent his satire far greater strength and coherence than it possesses, and would have found it easier to give delinquents their due; as it is, he "sloshes about," as Americans say, without any settled principle, and has filled some pages with rather vague declamation, which might have been usefully devoted to the exposure of other abuses besides those on which he has touched.

He comes before us, however, not only as a satirist but as a poet, and in the latter respect we freely allow him to have merit. He would have done better if he had taken more time, for his work bears evident marks of the haste with which he has buckled on his armour, eager "to slay and make an end." In an ambitious passage about the sun and moon, he talks of the former as "blustering in the western skies," and, in the same connection, of "his proud and petulant boyhood," both of which phrases are singularly inapplicable to the idea of sunset. What, also, does he mean by "clandestine secrets," at page 35, and what by the mention of the "novice at the convent grille," "eager to eye, but fearful to reveal?" The best passage, in a poetical point of view, is the following, which, if we except the odd use of the word "assoil," is not without vigour and grace :—

Shame more on him, who, flippant, in the sun,  
Recks not if Man's Great Fight be lost or won;  
Beside some sunny river dreams aloof,  
Nor heeds the river's eloquent reproof!

O Boy! it urges, Come with me along,  
A stream no more, but broad and swift and strong.  
I loved the hills, where, tiny tarn, I lay  
Screened from the rude intrusion of the Day :  
I loved their patient slopes whose outstretched arms  
Saved me, too confident, from courted harms,  
Guiding my steps uncertain, till they grew  
Firmer and not so devious, then withdrew :  
I loved the bright broad meadows where I played,  
I loved the woodland's transitory shade :  
I loved the lawns where beves of fair girls,  
Pure as their robes though frolic as their curia,  
Tripped down from where along the trellised wall  
They train'd their plants, themselves outblooming all,  
Flowers o'er my pathway prodigally cast,  
Coaxed me to stay but praised me as I passed.  
Labour expects me on the banks below :  
O lagging Boy! pursue me as I go !  
Me many a solemn embassy awaits,  
Me the swarm'd concourse of impatient freights :  
To me the palpitating cities call  
To bear the benefits of each and all.  
Limpid no more, I rush to court assail,  
Proud of the stains of decorating Toil,  
Where splendid burthens dropping on my breast  
Dismiss me blessing and avouch me blest.  
Onwards I go, to greet the whelming tide,  
The sad supremacy of self denied,  
Solicitous no more since soon to be  
One with the vague unutterable Sea !

Of the purely satiric portions, the part we like best is that devoted to Mr. Dickens and his disciples, whose tricks of style are shown up in an amusing cento put together from an article by one of the most prominent of the school. The set of writers in question however, might have deservedly furnished materials for a far severer castigation, not only for their style, but for the tone and tendency of their writing,—a point which seems to have escaped Mr. Austin's notice altogether. As regards Mr. Dickens himself, we fully agree with all that Mr. Austin says of the decline exhibited in many of his later works, though, if satirists could be just, the reviving powers shown in his present serial ought to be reckoned as a set-off in his favour.

In conclusion, we do not know whether Mr. Austin has any other object in view in his second satire than that of venting his irritation at the treatment he has received, and of attracting the world to listen to his complaints. He has probably made sure of being read whenever he writes again ; but he has powers which should induce him to aim at something higher than mere notoriety.—*Press*.

The force and vigour of many of the lines are extremely great.—*Literary Gazette*.

Another song, of which poor H—— D—— is the victim, and whose illustrious career is thus pungently narrated. . . . Savage and smart.—*Sunday Times*.

One of our contemporaries stated in a review of the "Season," by Mr. Alfred Austin, that its author was a "young gentleman," that no youth could wield the lash of satire, as he could not unite "the delicacy of touch with the strength of arm." He has retorted upon his censors in a manner which certainly proves that if he has not the necessary "delicacy of touch," he certainly has "the strength of arm" to administer a very severe fagellation.—*Observer*.

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